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ABSTRACT

This monograph serves two purposes: (1) to stimulate further reflection and discussion among education leaders and policymakers to revitalize and strengthen the role that school leaders play in school reform; and (2) to assist researchers in identifying areas of future work. It synthesizes some of the most current literature pertinent to leadership and offers ideas and suggestions that may serve as the basis for further study about the leadership strategies that help bring about meaningful and long-lasting reform. The intent is to identify the major issues involved in developing leaders who sustain effective change. Leaders need to examine carefully whether the changes they are implementing are the best ones for their students in the long run. School leaders need also to balance competing demands and to create environments in which diverse viewpoints can come together to create a common vision for what schools should be. To make and sustain meaningful, long-lasting changes, the conception of what "leadership" means must be expanded from a narrow focus on improving the skills of a single man or woman to the building of the capacity of the community of teachers, students, parents, as well as administrators to lead. (Contains 26 references.) (DFR)

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In addition, special thanks is owed to Dr. J. Timothy Waters, McREL's executive director, whose experience as a school superintendent and knowledge of school leadership were particularly valuable in reviewing and guiding revisions to this document.

In sum, the document that follows is the result of many long hours of research, thought, and writing, which I believe will help to advance practitioners' and researchers' understanding of school leadership, particularly during times of fundamental change.

Dr. Louis F. Cicchinelli
Executive Vice President and Deputy Director
Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning
March 2000

> Without high-quality, skilled, and sustainable leadership at the school, district, and policy-making levels, the transformation of public schools will not occur. Change will require strong leaders — those who can build, maintain, and strengthen collaborative relationships within schools and outside of schools.
>
> (McREL Board of Directors, 1999)

INTRODUCTION

Effective leadership is a key component of lasting reform efforts. But what is leadership? More to the point, what are the characteristics of leadership that help create and sustain worthwhile reform?

In 1999, the McREL Board of Directors, a group of educators and policymakers from the seven-state Central Region, challenged educators and policymakers to work together to revitalize and strengthen the role that school leaders play in school reform. This monograph is an initial step in responding to that charge. It is hoped that this document will serve two purposes: (1) stimulate further reflection and discussion among education leaders and policymakers and (2) assist researchers in identifying areas of future work. This paper synthesizes some of the most-current literature pertaining to leadership and offers ideas and suggestions that may serve as the basis for further study about the leadership strategies that help bring about meaningful and long-lasting reform.

A Changing World

Without a doubt, the world is changing at an incredible rate. An immigration rate twice that of a century ago has resulted in dramatic demographic shifts. The difference in the mean income between the wealthiest and the poorest continues to grow. Home schooling and charter schools are increasingly being chosen as alternatives for students, and cries for accountability in schools are deafening. Advances in technology and science are mind boggling; the burgeoning Internet has placed a tremendous amount of knowledge literally at our fingertips; and huge companies are merging with other huge companies, which will undoubtedly have implications for the workplace of the future. Advances in knowledge and an increasingly complex society call for an even more educated electorate.

Society's views toward public education also have changed. As noted education leader Carl Glickman (1998) points out, the public school system "is being attacked continuously, with some calling to replace public schools with privatization, tuition vouchers, and unbridled free choice" (p. 1). Some advocates of school choice claim that the public school system is not working well enough to serve the needs of individuals in a fast-paced society. Others have labeled the current education system obsolete (Wagner, 1998).

Educators Andy Hargreaves and Michael Fullan (1998) maintain that because of all these technological and societal changes and pressures, the walls of the school have — and should — "come tumbling down" (p. vii). Problems that were once "out there" are intruding more and more into schools. Schools must engage and connect more openly and deeply with the wider community — with all its complexities, problems, and rapid change — if they want to improve the future of education. As Hargreaves and Fullan argue, it is vitally important that educators not ignore these outside forces,"for if they are unprepared, they will only fall prey to their most damaging effects" (p. 61).

ALL CHANGE IS NOT THE SAME

Like the rest of the world, schools are changing. "School improvement," "education reform," and similar themes of renewal have been an integral part of the public school conversation for the past 20 years and much longer if we consider earlier waves of reform. In short, the idea of change is not new to education.

But one aspect of change that educators are grappling with more deeply is the idea that all change is not the same. In fact, change processes differ significantly (see, e.g., Bechard & Pritchard, 1992; Nadler & Tushman, 1995; Quinn, 1996). All organizations face change processes that are fundamentally different, not because the organizations are fundamentally different (though they may be), but because there are distinctly different change processes. A first step, then, is to define these essentially different types of change. As organizational change researchers David Nadler and Michael Tushman (1995) argue, a "language system" for speaking about these distinctions is crucial to effectively dealing with change:

> If we are to understand and manage change, then we need a language system that will help us to comprehend some of the different types of changes facing organizations. . . . Such a language system would also help us to grasp how different approaches to change management are appropriate to different types of change. Each type of change poses different demands and requires different kinds of managerial strategies and techniques. (p. 17)

The change process can be thought of in a variety of ways that highlight its various dimensions and effects (e.g., the familiar, time-oriented "short-term"/"long-term" change). But given the complexity and pace of societal and worldwide change, a distinction that is most relevant is that between *incremental change* and *fundamental* or *deep change*. In this paper, these terms are used to highlight the difference between step-by-step adjustments that groups and societies routinely engage in and the kind of profound change that occurs when an organization is compelled to shift its fundamental way of operating.

Incremental Change

Perhaps the most succinct definition of incremental change is fine-tuning — making relatively minor adjustments in a system. Nadler and Tushman (1995) define incremental change as a series of initiatives, each of which "attempts to build on the work that has already been accomplished and improves the functioning of the enterprise in relatively small increments" (p. 22). Robert Quinn (1996), University of Michigan professor and organizational consultant, offers a similar description when he writes that incremental change "is usually limited in scope and is often reversible. . . . [It] usually does not disrupt our past patterns — it is an extension of the past" (p. 3).

Incremental change is a normal and ongoing part of any effective organization. Like any relationship, group, or system, as people and processes work together, better ways of living and operating together are tried to help the system run more smoothly, effectively, and efficiently. In a school, this kind of continual adjusting could mean creating better ways to involve parents in their children's education or improving teachers' access to one another and to meaningful information about students — for example, setting up regular meetings and other forums for teachers across content areas to share perspectives about students' progress. Such changes, even those that involve many resources and impact many people, do not equate to a fundamental shift in an organization's way of doing business, although they may very well mean doing particular tasks better. In short, write Nadler and Tushman, incremental change involves the kind of "constant tinkering" that all effective organizations continually engage in to "improve the fit among the components of the organization" (p. 22).

Fundamental Change

Although incremental change can impact people and processes, it differs significantly from change that is *fundamental* (Beckhard & Pritchard, 1992), *deep* (Quinn, 1996), or *discontinuous* (Nadler & Tushman, 1995). This kind of change typically involves altering the very essence or identity of a system — in other words, *transforming* the system. Deep change, asserts Quinn, is much more difficult and demands a great deal of those who are part of the system:

> Deep change differs from incremental change in that it requires new ways of thinking and behaving. It is change that is major in scope, discontinuous with the past and generally irreversible. The deep change effort distorts existing patterns of action and involves taking risks. (p. 3)

A fundamental change for many schools and districts is the implementation of a standards-based approach, which necessitates dramatic changes in schooling. Typically, curricula must be changed, professional development must be revamped, resources must be reallocated, data collection systems must be developed, and so on. In addition, teachers may be challenged to reexamine, adjust, and sometimes drastically alter their practices. Such changes often represent dramatic departures from the past. Thus, it may be important to create an entirely new instructional support system for teachers as they change how they teach and assess.

In addition to teachers, there are many others who will be deeply affected by a standards-based approach to schooling. Students will be expected to master skills and knowledge at specified levels of performance. The nature of their schoolwork, their level of accountability, their grades, and their status in school all are likely to change. Parents will be expected to adjust to the impact of such changes on their children, learn unfamiliar terminology, and interpret new information about their children. If a school's approach includes changes in the way students are grouped for instruction, advanced from level to level within the system, and recognized for their academic performance, then it may be important to help other community members understand such changes, which may appear to depart dramatically from the way schools have operated in the past. Questions about why such a shift is taking place and what it means for the future also must be addressed. All of these stakeholders will need support and opportunities to learn along with teachers throughout the often-bumpy process of adopting a standards-based approach. In sum, reform efforts typically require fundamental shifts that shake up the system, inside and out.

One pitfall is to view fundamental change as "better" or more worthwhile than incremental change. It would be a mistake to assume all organizations committed to growing and adapting to a changing world must make only fundamental changes. In fact, incremental changes can make a big difference in an organization's effectiveness, in relationships among staff, and in relationships with community members. For example, adopting a revised report card format that provides more detailed information about students' progress can result in a number of benefits including enhanced communications between parents and teachers — one of the most important relationships in a school community. Nonetheless, in certain situations, described in more detail in the next section, organizations need to be prepared to make major departures from their past ways of operating.

Adaptive Challenges

A number of authors (see, e.g., Nadler & Tushman, 1995; Beckhard & Pritchard, 1992; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998) maintain that the impetus for significant change often is external. Many organizations are in the midst of fundamental change because of dramatic changes that are occurring in society, communication systems, and the global economy. Schools and districts are no different in this regard.

Such dramatic changes create what leadership researchers Ronald Heifetz and Donald Laurie (1997) call *adaptive challenges* — issues an organization faces that require it to change its practices at a deep level in order to survive. As Heifetz and Laurie (1997) argue, adaptive challenges "are often systemic problems with no ready answers" (p. 124). As noted earlier, implementing standards and designing supporting systems is a fundamental change that many districts and schools are undergoing. The nationwide movement to adopt a standards-based approach is an example of a response to the adaptive challenges of significant societal changes coupled with heightened attention on student performance by just about everyone — state and federal leaders, policy makers, business leaders, parents, and so on. These adaptive challenges require schools to change the way they operate in order to thrive in an environment that differs from the past. The new environment challenges deeply held beliefs, questions values that were accepted in the past, and poses "legitimate yet competing perspectives" (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997, p. 124).

Of course, just because an organization is confronted with an adaptive challenge does not mean it will necessarily engage in fundamental change. This is not surprising given that most people don't like change, thus the familiar refrain, "We may be tired of this problem, but at least we're used to it." Precisely because deep change efforts are so unsettling, many prefer incremental change, even though this kind of relatively focused change may be insufficient in a given situation. Dealing with problems incrementally is much more familiar and, therefore, more comfortable for most people. A fundamental or discontinuous change, on the other hand, requires those involved to call forth and learn new ways of interacting with problems and with the environment.

LEADING FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE

School leadership is a primary arena in which the adaptive challenges of a rapidly shifting world require discovering new ways of interacting with issues. In addition to societal changes, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) (1996), a nonprofit organization made up primarily of those who head state departments of elementary and secondary education, has identified three key changes in schooling that call for a new vision of leadership, or what it calls "a redefined portfolio of leadership skills for school administrators":

- a renewed struggle to redefine learning and teaching to more successfully challenge and engage all youngsters in the education process …
- strong rumblings that community-focused and caring-centered conceptions of schooling will increasingly compete for legitimacy with more established notions of school organizations as hierarchies and bureaucracies …
- stakeholders external to the school building — parents, interested members of the corporate sector and leaders in the community — will increasingly play significantly enhanced roles in education. (p. 6)

Current Standards for Leaders

As part of its effort to redefine the "portfolio" of skills school leaders should possess, the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC), a program of the CCSSO, created a set of model standards, "forged from research on productive educational leadership and the wisdom of colleagues" (CCSSO, 1996, p. iii). These standards became the basis for an administrator licensure test used in 25 states. ISLLC is, of course, not alone in drafting such standards. Since the 1980s, numerous groups have drafted standards for leaders. In 1998, the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) (Hoyle, English, & Steffy, 1998) drew upon several of these reports, including the ISLLC's, in an attempt to create what it conceded "might seem the impossible: To provide a clear recitation and description of the standards and related skills school leaders must master and apply to make the most of their important positions" (p. vii). Both groups' standards are provided in Table 1, which highlights some of the common themes between these two sets. Both groups, for example, identify ethics and integrity, and the ability to work well with the community

as key characteristics of effective school leaders. Other shared themes include collaboration, diversity, and a commitment to student learning.

Table 1
Standards for School Leaders
Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) &
American Association of School Administrators (AASA)

ISLLC (CCSSO) Standards[1]	AASA Standards & Skills[2]
A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by . .	*An effective school leader has the following attributes:*
facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community	visionary leadership, including creating and communicating a vision "centered on the success of all children and youth"
understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context	skills in school governance and collaborative policy formulation that demonstrate an understanding of the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context
collaborating with families and community members, responding to community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources	effective communication and community relations skills, including the ability to build effective school-community partnerships
ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources, for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment	skills in organizational management, including the ability to make "data-driven decisions that show good stewardship of resources"
advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth	the ability to plan and develop curriculum that enhances teaching and learning for all students
	the ability to use research and best practice to create instruction systems that maximize the learning of all students
	the ability to effectively evaluate staff performance
	the ability to create staff development programs that enhance the self-improvement of every individual and overall school performance

ISLLC (CCSSO) Standards[1]	AASA Standards & Skills[2]
A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by . .	*An effective school leader has the following attributes:*
	the ability to use education research, evaluation, and planning to improve student performance
acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner	demonstrated ethical, moral, and personal integrity, and a sensitivity that promotes democratic, multicultural schools

[1]From *Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium: Standards for School Leaders* (pp. 10–21), by the Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996, Washington, DC: Author.

[2]Condensed from *Skills for Successful 21st Century School Leaders: Standards for Peak Performers*, by J. R. Hoyle, F. W. English, & B. E. Steffy, 1998, Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators.

In introducing the AASA standards, Hoyle, English, and Steffy note that "just as no single theory of leadership accounts adequately for all the leadership dimensions of successful performance, no single set of administrative standards and related skills and dispositions will solve every problem facing school leaders today" (p. vii). Thus, they acknowledge that their standards merely provide "a good starting point by synthesizing the prevalent research into a set of useful standards and skills" (p. vii). In fact, these standards are a good place to begin an inquiry about the skills that are necessary for effective school leadership, but they do not offer a complete picture.

Nadler and Tushman (1995), who have studied leadership and change in business organizations, note that the leadership skills required to facilitate fundamental change (what they call *discontinuous* change) differ from those required to facilitate the kind of ongoing, step-by-step changes that are familiar to most executive leaders. In light of the systemic reform efforts that so many schools and districts are undertaking, this discussion must be expanded to encompass the role of leadership during periods of transformation.

Expanding the Standards for Leadership

To develop a broader view of leadership, it is useful to consider the works of writers who focus on businesses and other noneducation organizations. Publications that focus on change in the business world, in particular, are much more numerous than those that address change in education, because until recently many researchers and writers were attracted to the change-or-perish circumstances confronting businesses in the rapidly changing marketplace. But now, these same realities appear to be confronting schools and districts.

A review of leadership and change literature by educators and noneducators alike leads to the following guidelines that appear crucial for leading organizations through fundamental change:

- Recognize that leadership is not the same as management
- Give up the notion of the "hero-leader"
- Develop broad-based leadership
- Encourage individual initiative
- Develop a learning organization
- Take a balcony view

An important aside is necessary at this point. Some writers, such as educator Thomas Sergiovanni (1996), caution that applying business models of success to education is inappropriate given the unique nature of schools. In particular, Sergiovanni argues that "good leadership for corporations and other organizations . . . may not be good leadership for . . . social enterprises. . . .Everything that happens in the schoolhouse has moral overtones that are virtually unmatched by other institutions in our society" (p. xii). For too long, he writes, educators have borrowed theories of leadership from businesses, sports teams, and other corporations that don't serve the real goals of schools. Furthermore, he asserts that until educators start inventing their "own practice," it is unlikely that real school improvement will result (p. vii).

Nonetheless, given the dearth of literature on leading schools through fundamental change, it is valuable to examine insights gained from business and other organizations. Yet, Sergiovanni's arguments are persuasive. Schools *are* unique organizations, and it would be a mistake to directly apply every insight gained from fields outside education to school leadership issues. The following guidelines were developed with this caveat in mind.

Recognize That Leadership Is Not the Same as Management. Documentaries on the transition from silent films to "talkies" identify two categories of actors: those who had the skills to make the transition and those who did not. In other words, although some actors were very skilled in one venue, they did not have the requisite skills in a different venue. Similarly, a different set of skills is required to lead a stable organization than one undergoing dramatic changes. One of the biggest differences, according to Sergiovanni (1996) (see also Block, 1996; Senge, 1999a), is that leaders of change must adopt a *stewardship* approach to leadership:

> Stewardship is a way to use power to serve through the practice of partnership and empowerment. This is the alternative to the conventional notions of "strong leadership" for implementing changes. The intent is to redesign our organizations so that service is the centerpiece and ownership and responsibility are strongly felt among those close to doing the work and contacting customers. (p. 63)

Serving the community — the internal as well as the external community — is a key aspect of what executive consultant Charlotte Roberts (1999) calls "conscious oversight." Leaders who bring this perspective to an organization help ensure the long-term health of the system by honoring and serving the life of the larger and longer-term community:

> Conscious oversight is a discipline of care and nurturing of people and systems with an eye toward the impact on generations who come after them. … Decisions made as part of this discipline are full of respect — for the traditions of the past (while distinguishing those parts which are still important), for the realities of today (from a variety of points of view), and for the sustainability of life for generations who come after. When practicing conscious oversight, people focus on ensuring congruence and viability of a system larger than themselves, in service of a purpose larger than themselves. (p. 546)

School leaders who practice conscious oversight consider, for example, the impact of new instructional programs on teachers — not just in terms of time demands, but also in terms of their professional development and mental health. In short, they are concerned about the "climate" of the organization — whether people feel valued and supported versus used and neglected.

Becoming more of a steward and less of a manager can be a difficult change for many senior leaders who are accustomed to the more-traditional view that a leader is a kind of "taskmaster" who "attends to performance, focuses on results, solves problems, and influences lower-level decisions" (Quinn, 1996, p. 149). Superintendents, principals, and other school leaders who become too focused on managing day-to-day problems can unwittingly neglect the important role they can play in helping to create a shared vision for change. That is, they can become myopically focused on managing small, incremental changes, rather than encouraging their schools to take a broader, longer-term view, one which is essential to beginning and maintaining fundamental change.

Give up the Notion of a "Hero-Leader". When most people think of "leadership," they think of one person in a position of authority — whether that person is a CEO, president, military captain, district superintendent, or school principal. But a key to sustaining successful reform is giving up what management innovation theorist Peter Senge (1999a) calls "the myth of the hero-leader":

> According to this shared story, leaders are the few special people blessed with the capability for command and influence. They have become leaders precisely because of their unique mix of skill, ambition, vision, charisma, and no small amount of hubris. They can overcome the blocks that stymie everyone else. They make great things happen. The implication is clear: If you too want to make a difference, you had better be one of these special people. In the world of today's organizations, this idealization of great leadership leads to an endless search for heroic figures who can come in to rescue the rest of us. (p. 11)

This kind of "gunslinger" view of problem solving is deeply imbedded in our culture. Television programming, movies, and literature are filled with heroes of the likes of Superman, Wonder Woman, the Lone Ranger, Zorro, the Terminator, and so on who ride in (or fly or gallop in, as the case may be) to save the day. This idealized, romantic view of leadership may be perfect for the big screen and, it can be reasonably argued, necessary at times in real life. But all too often, when the gunslinger leaves town, the town falls apart.

A similar situation occurs in schools or districts undertaking reform when too much is riding on the initiative, vision, and leadership of a single person. Those who have been involved in reform efforts have noted the void — and subsequent lack of progress — that can appear when the "hero-leader" leaves. People are far too "accustomed to looking to someone with formal authority to lead the way" (Lambert, 1998). Reform efforts falter, interest wanes, and eventually everything comes to a screeching halt. Although schools and other organizations have adopted "collaboration," "teamwork," and "shared decision making" approaches, often such approaches are subordinated by a more traditional approach of leadership that permeates the organization. That is, although people in the organization may work collaboratively on an initiative, they may nonetheless continue to look to a single figure for the vision or energy to guide and sustain an initiative or reform.

In "The Work of Leadership," Heifetz and Laurie (1997) argue that altering this traditional approach to leadership is imperative when an organization faces an adaptive challenge:

> In order to make change happen, executives have to break a long-standing behavior pattern of their own: providing leadership in the form of solutions. [Although] this tendency is quite natural. . . . the locus of responsibility for problem solving when a company faces an adaptive challenge must shift to its people. Solutions to adaptive challenges reside not in the executive suite but in the collective intelligence of employees at all levels, who need to use one another as resources, often across boundaries, and learn their way to those solutions. (p. 124)

Senge (1999a) takes this idea a step further in his assertion that clinging to the hero-leader notion may actually prevent organizations from creating and sustaining true change:

> Worshiping the cult of the hero-leader is a surefire way to maintain change-averse institutions. In fact, one can hardly think of a better strategy to achieve precisely this goal. The price that we all pay, in the long run, is incalculable: institutions that lurch from crisis to crisis, continual stress on the members of those institutions, mediocre (at best) long-term financial performance, and a subtle, pervasive reinforcement of the point of view that "common people" are powerless to change things. (p. 12)

In short, when the vision or impetus for change comes from a single person, the rest of the organization becomes less likely to buy-in to the reform effort. As Sergiovanni (1996) notes, "principals have a special responsibility to share their visions of what schools can become, but they must do this in an invitational mode" (p. 83). When this approach is not followed, the principal's vision often is not embraced by the faculty. For example, in a study of 30 site-based management schools (Wohlstetter, et al., 1997), principal-identified visions were associated with struggling schools:

> Principals of struggling schools often loaded up the site council with trivial details and typically identified, on their own, a vision for the school, presenting it as a fait accompli to the staff. Many times this led to a power struggle between teachers and the principal, and, in some schools, the faculty simply rejected the principal's

> unilateral agenda for change. Teachers frequently referred to the "principal's vision" in these schools, and they were unwilling to accept guidance and leadership from the principal because they felt little sense of ownership and accountability to the plan. (p. 39)

In sum, abandoning our search for the person who will save the day may be the key to success. In *Building Leadership Capacity in Schools,* Linda Lambert (1998) builds the case that shifting our traditional view of leadership is pivotal to successful school reform. "As long as improvement is dependent on a single person or a few people or outside directions and forces," Lambert writes, "it will fail" (p. 3).

Develop Broad-Based Leadership. An essential lesson, then, is that for school improvement to be sustained, a broad-based, shared sense of leadership must be alive in the school community. Building the capacity of many — teachers, parents, and students, as well as superintendents, principals, and school board members — to engage in leading reform efforts is critical. In effect, as Lambert (1998) articulates, we must broaden our concept of leadership, separating it from individual people, roles, and "a discrete set of individual behaviors" (p. 5). Senge (1999a) argues for developing "leadership communities" instead of hero-leaders (p. 16).

At a practical level, districts surveyed as part of a nationwide examination of reform strategies identified broad-based leadership as an important element of successful school reform (see Laboratory Network Program, 2000). Site-based instructional management teams, curriculum writing teams, and other forms of school-level management were reported as being useful ways to engage teachers and others as decision-making partners during the process of reform. Successful operation of the teams requires school leaders (i.e., principals and department heads) who are willing to share control and decision making with the entire staff. Sustained and effective school reform, then, is dependent upon a concept of leadership that encompasses the whole school community. Although broad-based participation includes those in traditional leadership positions such as superintendents and principals, it is not limited to them. Teachers, as well as principals, must drive reform.

In arguing for the development of leaders *across* the organization, not just at "the top," Senge (1999a) highlights the interaction among three types of leaders: *local leaders*, *internal networkers* (also called *network leaders* or *community builders*), and *executive leaders*. Each of these types of leaders, Senge maintains, has different points of influence and power bases. Together, they begin and sustain school improvement initiatives, making each of them vital to the success and impact of any change initiative.

Senge (1999a) defines *local leaders* as those individuals who are accountable for achieving results at the "local level" (whether the local level is a team, a unit, a work group, or some other subset of a larger system, such as a school district), who have the authority to change the way work is carried out at the local level, and — most importantly — who have the "passion for creating better results" (pp. 16–17). The critical role that these leaders play is in testing the viability of new ideas. For example, in the case of a district-wide reform effort, *local leaders* could be school principals

who are able to determine whether teachers have the necessary skills to adopt a new reading program embedded in the larger reform effort. *Local leaders* could also be teachers who occasionally serve in leadership roles by facilitating grade-level team meetings, providing staff development, or leading study groups or data analysis teams.

Internal networkers are organizational "seed carriers," helping to spread new ideas through the informal network of a system (Senge, 1999a, p. 17). Network leaders have little formal power, but in a very real way, it is this lack of formal power that makes them most effective. Senge (1999a) argues that the strength of network leaders is "their ability to move about the larger organization, to participate in and nurture broad networks of alliances with other, like-minded individuals, and to help local leaders, both by assisting directly and by putting them in contact with others who share their passions and from whom they can learn" (p. 17). Internal networkers, then, are a vital part of pulling the network together and developing alliances. Expanding upon the example provided in the previous paragraph, internal networkers might be members of the district professional development department or teachers on special assignment who are working to train teachers in the new reading program, or simply teachers who have wholeheartedly endorsed the new program and are sharing ideas about and fostering enthusiasm for it.

Executive leaders, as described by Senge (1999a), "are one step removed from the organization's direct value-producing activities . . . [but] are accountable for overall organizational performance" (p. 18). Continuing the previous example, executive leaders might be superintendents or curriculum coordinators in charge of overseeing the reform program. But rather than commanding changes from the top down, executive leaders rely upon local leaders and internal networkers to accomplish their goals. This reliance, is, of course, reciprocal. That is, local leaders, internal networkers, and executive leaders are dependent to some extent on one another to accomplish goals. For example, Senge (1999b) explains that local leaders depend on internal networkers for mentoring and on executive leaders to create an organizational environment that welcomes such collaborative work and innovation.

In summary, in light of the fact that schools are changing rapidly, it is important to create a community of leaders who are involved in the work of reform. The traditional model of leadership looks something like a pyramid — the executive is "at the top" and everyone else is at "the bottom." New ideas and visions are accordingly transmitted from the top of the organization to the bottom. But this transmission often gets bogged down at lower levels because of a lack of buy-in by staff. And all too often, the executive leaves before seeing his or her vision come to fruition, and the cycle continues. People at lower levels of the organization eventually become jaded and may conclude cynically that when a new executive comes in calling for a change, all they have to do is "wait it out." Thus, in a truly dynamic organization, leadership needs to look different. Everyone needs to respond to the adaptive challenge, so that even if the executive leader leaves, the vision and impetus for change remain embedded in the organization.

Encourage and Nurture Individual Initiative. A lesson to be drawn from this discussion of broad-based leadership is that in attempting to bring about fundamental or systemic change, it is important to be particularly aware of the tremendous difference that individual people can make.

Several of the authors whose works are reviewed in this paper (see, e.g., Quinn, 1996; Frohman, 1997; Heifetz & Laurie, 1997) emphasized this point. For example, management consultant and author Alan Frohman (1997) reported on his work to identify those who initiate change, regardless of their position in a system. As described by Frohman (1997), *initiators* identify a problem or opportunity and then persistently lead the drive for a solution, all the while focused on and committed to the organization's mission and goals.

Heifetz and Laurie (1997) point out that "giving a voice to all people is the foundation of an organization that is willing to experiment and learn" (p. 129). However, these voices often are silenced because they create disequilibrium in the organization. One of the roles of leaders is to simultaneously protect these voices and help build the communication skills of those who articulate a differing point of view so they are more likely to be heard. It is important to realize that new perspectives can, in fact, come from "unlikely" sources.

Almost anyone in an organization can potentially serve as a "change agent," shaking up the status quo or forcing an organization to question its assumptions (Glickman, 1998). This does not mean, however, that executive leaders cannot fulfill this role. In fact, one particularly good example of the impact a change agent can make is Corkin Cherubini, a superintendent in Calhoun County, Georgia. As described by Glickman, Cherubini discovered that his district placed African American students with higher achievement scores in lower-track classes, while placing White students with lower scores in higher-track classes. The assumption that resulted in this practice — undoubtedly unspoken — was that African American students could not achieve at the same level as White students. Although this practice was common in other districts, Cherubini refused to turn a blind eye. Despite derision from colleagues and rebuke from the school board, which eventually canceled his contract, Cherubini persisted in trying to end the practice. Ultimately, he resorted to requesting a U.S. Department of Justice investigation. Eventually the practice was abolished and Cherubini's contract was reinstated.

Build a Learning Organization. The previous example also illustrates how an organization's beliefs and practices can become calcified and resistant to fundamental change. Many writers have argued that the solution — the way for an organization to remain dynamic and adaptable — is to ensure that it is a *learning organization*, that is,"an organization skilled at creating, acquiring, and transferring knowledge, and at modifying its behavior to reflect new knowledge and insights" (Garvin, 1993, p. 80). In this kind of an organization, change and improvement constantly take place both for the organization and the individual (Bennett & O'Brien, 1994).

In practical terms, this means that every person and every situation is a resource for learning. For example, when asked to describe a professional learning community, education reform leader Ann Lieberman (cited in Sparks, 1999) described one elementary school's approach. Frequent grade-level meetings, led by teachers selected by their colleagues, were opportunities for teachers to work together and learn how to serve students more effectively. Teachers analyzed students' work and examined assessment data in order to identify ways to close achievement gaps between groups of students. In addition, teachers reflected on whether their instructional practices were working. Lieberman noted that learning resulted from a variety of sources: outside consultants, workshops,

print materials, conferences, as well as the expertise and experience of the internal faculty and staff.

Creating such a community of learners might mean doing what the Woodrow Wilson Elementary School in Manhattan, Kansas has done. The school, a recent National Awards Program for Model Professional Development winner, created study groups in order to focus staff development on raising student achievement in math — a topic teachers identified through a school wide action research project. As a result of these focused efforts, the school posted large gains in statewide math assessments (U.S. Department of Education, 1997).

The key idea is to create an organization capable of using honest inquiry to examine the appropriateness of past practices or a charted path. Lambert (1998) believes it is necessary "to begin our inquiries by evoking our previous experiences, assumptions, values, and beliefs about the issues at hand. Doing this makes it more likely that we will be able to pose relevant questions and mediate new learnings" (p. 82). Study groups, reflection groups, and storytelling groups (Wallace, 1996) are options.

During periods of fundamental change, however, just about everything about the system can come into question, including reporting relationships, people's roles, and basic operating principles. This kind of environment can be stimulating, but it can also easily border on chaos. Executive leaders have a particularly critical role to play during these times. They must be skilled at creating an environment in which people are open to exploring and dialoguing about ideas and alternatives, many of which can be unsettling. They must be able to shake things up enough to stimulate change but not so much that the environment becomes unfocused or counter-productive.

One way executive leaders can do this is to create a safe place to talk about what is going on in the organization, what Heifetz and Laurie (1997) call creating a "holding environment." This is especially important in the early stages of the change process when people have been uprooted from the familiar and feel vulnerable:

> In the early stages of corporate change, the holding environment can be a temporary "place" in which a leader creates the conditions for diverse groups to talk to one another about the challenges facing them, to frame and debate issues, and to clarify the assumptions behind competing perspectives and values. Over time, more issues can be phased in as they become ripe. (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997, p. 127).

People only feel safe in this holding environment when they trust the members of the group and the larger organization. Trust takes time to develop. Consequently, these groups must stay together long enough to truly trust the environment.

Take a Balcony View. Leaders often fail to recognize important trends or identify needed changes because they are too involved in day-to-day activities and cannot see the forest for the trees, so to speak. Thus, as Heifetz and Laurie (1997) put it, leaders must be able to "view patterns in the environment as if they were on a balcony. It does them no good to be swept up in the field of action" and miss important, unfolding patterns of change (p. 125). One of the first

requirements of "getting on the balcony," then, is distancing ego and personal perspective from what is happening in the field of action. A leader must strive to become an objective observer and then an interpreter. Getting on the balcony means seeing what *is* occurring rather than what one would like to occur.

For some, the idea that the balcony rather than the field of action is the appropriate place creates dissonance. There is the expectation, especially of principals, that they belong in the trenches with teachers. A balance is called for between being on the balcony and on the field. As Heifetz and Laurie (1997) point out, the balcony view is especially important when the organization is engaged in adaptive work:

> Without the capacity to move back and forth between the field of action and the balcony, to reflect day to day, moment to moment, on the many ways in which an organization's habits can sabotage adaptive work, a leader easily and unwittingly becomes a prisoner of the system. The dynamics of adaptive changes are far too complex to keep track of, let alone influence, if leaders stay only on the field of play. (pp. 125–126)

Because the balcony offers a different perspective, it is also an ideal location for self-reflection. Heifetz (1994) argues that "to interpret events, a person who leads needs to understand his own way of processing and distorting what he hears. To sustain the stresses of leadership, he needs to know about his own biases to compensate for them" (p. 271). In practice, taking the balcony view may mean, as education writers Robert Garmston and Bruce Wellman (1998) explain, being neither focused exclusively on one's own perceptions nor on someone's else views but, rather, stepping back to consider the bigger picture:

> The balcony view is macrocentric. (With compassion or detachment, I understand the nature of the situation. Looking down at my interaction with the group, I gain the most knowledge — about me, about the group, and about our interactions — and I can make the most strategic decisions about my participation. . . .) This is the same skill that teachers employ when they "monitor and adjust" in their classrooms. (p. 32)

Just as teachers "monitor and adjust" their classroom practices based on how students are performing, leaders must learn to "monitor and adjust" progress toward the vision based on what they see from the balcony.

FINAL THOUGHTS

This monograph used a broad-brush approach to identify the major issues involved in developing leaders who sustain effective change. The fundamental changes that are called for in education often require leaders to question deeply held assumptions and long-term practices. Nevertheless, in responding to adaptive challenges, leaders must be careful not to change so rapidly that their organizations lose something worthwhile. In the past, education reformers often have bounced from fad to fad, with little impact on student achievement. Thus, the challenge for leaders

is to carefully examine whether the changes they are implementing are the best ones for their students in the long run.

School leaders also need to balance competing demands — competing adaptive challenges, if you will. For example, in light of a rapidly changing economy, many business leaders and educators advocate that schools provide students with the proper training to succeed in a high-tech economy. Others argue that schools cannot serve simply as job-training sites; they must also help develop students' creative skills — the kind of skills that foster new technologies and entrepreneurial enterprises and, as a result, new markets and jobs. Therefore, successful leaders need to be able create environments in which diverse viewpoints such as these can come together to create a common vision for what schools should be.

Successful school leaders also must remain keenly aware that education is a unique pursuit. Schooling is inherently value-laden because it shapes the lives of students, and thus, our culture and society. That makes schools different from other organizations, such as businesses, where it may be prudent to simply adapt to changing environments. Education is generally seen as playing a key role in shaping, not simply reacting to, the outside environment. For example, just because television, video games, and other media have purportedly reduced students' attention spans does not mean that educators must create MTV-style, sound-bite lessons. Similarly, schools increasingly are viewed as agents for counteracting other negative aspects of society, such as violence or a perceived lack of character in today's students

This paper briefly presented some of the essential themes that define a new, broader view of leading education reform. Leadership is often viewed narrowly as executive leadership, or a single person at the helm of an organization. Accordingly, many groups and writers have offered standards for effective executive leaders. But in order to make and sustain meaningful, long-lasting changes, our conception of what "leadership" means must be expanded. When policymakers and educators talk about creating strong school leadership, rather than focusing only on improving the skills of a single man or woman or a tiny cadre of administrators, they also should be thinking about building the capacity of the community of teachers, students, parents, as well as administrators, to lead. In short, the goal is to create a learning community in which the drive for reform is shared and arises at every level and in every quarter of the community. In such an environment, the leader — typically the superintendent or principal — is no longer the so-called fountain of answers, which allows direction and vision to continue even after he or she moves on (see Lambert, 1998; Senge, 1999; Heifetz & Laurie, 1997).

However, it is important to not lose sight of the importance of strong executive leadership. Developing leadership capacity across schools and districts does not mean creating "headless" organizations. Senge (1999b) makes this point when he argues that although all change does not "start at the top," executive leadership is vital in cultivating the kind of environment that is critical during fundamental change:

> Sooner or later executive leadership becomes crucial, especially in sustaining change that can have organization-wide impact. The real role of executive leadership is not

> in "driving people to change," but in creating organizational environments that inspire, support, and leverage the imagination and initiative that exists at all levels. (p. 566)

The issues raised in this paper are worthy of further study and reflection. A next step is to create opportunities for representatives of the education community to discuss these issues and relate them to their own experiences. This kind of dialogue and reflection can create a base upon which the "plan for the revitalization of effective leadership strategies" (McREL Board of Directors, 1999) can be built. Indeed, this is important work to undertake.

It is hoped that this report challenges educators to expand their notions of leadership — to reconceptualize leadership as something larger than a set of personal traits or skills such as those identified in existing standards for leaders. As Fullan (1998) argues, the education leaders of tomorrow will need a reservoir of skills and characteristics that differs significantly from those successful school leaders possessed just ten years ago. Developing high-quality, skilled, and sustainable leadership is a critical link in realizing the kind of long-lasting changes in education that are the mark of true transformation.

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